# Captain Thomas Yale (1648–1736)

## Origin and Family

Born c. 1648. Died Jan. 26, 1736, age 87.

**Father:** Thomas Yale (c. 1616–1683)
**Mother:** Mary Turner (c. 1622–1704)
**Spouse:** First, Rebecca Gibbard (1667), then Sarah Nash (c. 1690), and third Mary Beach (1716)

**Children** (all from his first wife Rebecca Gibbard):[1]

1. Hannah Yale (1669– )
2. Rebecca Yale (1671– )
3. Elizabeth Yale (1673– )
4. Theophilus Yale (1675–1760)
5. Thomas Yale (1678– )
6. Nathaniel Yale (1681– )
7. Mary Yale (1684– )
8. John Yale (1687– )

Captain Thomas Yale is the first of the Yale surname born in America. His title of Captain refers to his rank in the local county militia, known in those times as a Train Band.

From Rodney Horace Yale[1]: "Captain Thomas Yale, first of New Haven, and afterwards of Wallingford, in the same state, was thrice married – first, to Rebecca, daughter of William Gibbard, Esq., of New Haven, Dec 11, 1667, by William Jones, Esq., Deputy Governor; Second, to Sarah Nash, daughter of John Nash, Esq. She died May 27, 1716, and last he married Mary Beach, of Wallingford, July 31, 1716. He had no children by his last two wives."[1]

## Occupation

About two years after his first marriage, he joined others to build the new settlement of Wallingford, to which place he relocated in May 1670, with a few other families. The group all signed the 1668 Plantation Covenant of Wallingford under the guidance and direction of the New Haven Committee, as it was called.[1] According to the records of Wallingford, it appears that he was one of the most prominent, active, and energetic men among them. He assisted in the formation of the church, February 15, 1675, and in the call of the first and second ministers - the Rev. Samuel Street, in 1672, and Rev. Samuel Whittelsey, April 4, 1709.[1]

Rodney Horace Yale relied in part on an earlier book of Yale Genealogy written by a descendant Elihu Yale in 1850.[3] He devoted his book's Introduction to Capt. Thomas Yale:

*The present Generation of Yales having descended, with but few exceptions, from Thomas Yale, of Wallingford, I trust no apology will be needed for devoting a few pages here in giving a list of the original proprietors or settlers of that ancient town, with a sketch of some of their first proceedings, as all, I trust, will be proud to know that they have descended from such an ancestry, and to learn something of their history.*

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*Wallingford was actually begun 1669, and measures were adopted towards effecting it, but as the undertaking was one of great peril, on account of the Indians, it was deferred until 1670, when a greater number could be found willing to hazard the enterprise. At that time Hartford and New Haven had been settled only about 35 years. The people of New Haven, in their corporate capacity, owned the whole tract from the Sound, at New Haven, North, to the present village of West Meriden. They therefore, as soon as the increase of population would permit, felt disposed to push the settlement further into the interior, upon the unoccupied lands.*

*On a plan entirely different from that practiced at the present day, they did not sell farms to such as chose to purchase, but proceeded in a more orderly way, first calling a meeting of the settlement, and passing a vote to admit them as settlers in the township, conditioned that the applicant sustains a good moral and religious character.*

*The people of New Haven voted at a public meeting, to set off a certain portion of their territory to constitute a "village," to extend southward from the point where the old road to New Haven goes over Pilgrim's Harbor, ten miles, and to extend five miles, each side of Quinnipiac River. Their next act was the appointment of the above named Committee, whose duty it was to admit settlers and divide the lands among them, on certain stipulated conditions, and to superintend and control the entire settlement, until it had so far proceeded as to render it safe for the Planters to manage for themselves. This Committee then received applications from such as chose to commence a new settlement, selecting those only who in their opinion were best qualified for such a work. The persons thus selected mutually covenanted with each other, and with the said Committee, to observe certain rules and conditions in a written agreement, to which each one affixed his signature; that agreement was called the Plantation Covenant of Wallingford.*

*After the Committee had selected their men, they then proceeded to select a site for the village, which location is described in the Old Colony Records of New Haven, as being upon the hill, on the east side of the great plain, commonly called the New Haven plain, which cannot now but be recognized as the present location of the now flourishing and beautiful village of Wallingford. The Committee allotted to each planter a few acres of land in the village for a house lot—commencing at the South end of the said hill, running northerly. Having laid out the South part of the village, then next to the house lots, it was ordered that there should be a highway across the hill from East to West, six rods wide, and from thence, on the top of the hill, a long highway six rods wide, running Northerly, which corresponds with the present Main street of said village. On each side of which there were to be ranges of house lots containing six acres to each lot, which were distributed to the planters or actual settlers.*

*This having been done, the planters commenced building their log cabins and houses, and assumed the form of a regular settled community. The committee having arranged all the preliminaries necessary for the new plantation, surrendered their trust and the title to the whole, into the hands of the planters, who thereby became a body corporate, or in other words, a town.*

*After which, one of their first acts was to set out certain portions of meadow and woodland to each planter at convenient distances from the village. The lands lying on the river were first used, and are described as the lots on the river called New Haven East River, that are laid out as meadow land to several of the inhabitants, beginning at the hill called Blue Hill, where it comes near to the river, to run north or up the river. At this first allotment only thirty-eight lots were given out to as many individuals, some receiving eight and some twelve acres.*

*In these various transfers of land from the town of New Haven, and from them through their committee to the planters and ultimately to individual proprietors, no money or consideration was required or paid. The lands then being of little or no value.*

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*On the 13th day of June, 1673, they voted to allow for the first division of lands, to each planter, taking in the house lots, river lots, and all sorts of land, to the lowest rank 40 acres, to the middle rank 60 acres, and to those of the highest rank 80 acres.*

*At this time the company consisted of about one hundred persons, men, women and children, who, it appears, instead of scattering themselves on farms, as is now the custom in new settlements, erected their dwellings in a compact village. "This arrangement, though inconvenient for agricultural purposes, was doubtless necessary for defense and safety in those perilous times, when savage wars and the incursions of the Indians were so frequent."*

*With the true spirit of New England, they at once secured for themselves religious institutions and public worship; and from the first (this little band) sustained the preaching of the gospel. For the first two years, Mr. John Harriman, one of their number, preached to them on the Sabbath, though not an ordained minister.*

*In 1672, Rev. Samuel Street, a regular ordained minister, and son of the Rev. Nicholas Street of New Haven, was called to settle with them in the work of the ministry, and soon afterward entered upon the duties of his office, and continued with them until his death.*[3]

A common style of early colonial homes is referred to as “Saltbox”, and an excellent example that is still standing in Wallingford is the Nehemiah Royce house, built just two years after the establishment of the town. George Washington made a stop in Wallingford and addressed the town from this house.[2]

According to *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut.*[4] Thomas Yale represented the town of Wallingford in the Connecticut State Assembly (at the time called the Connecticut General Court) for many years: 1684–690, 1692–97, 1702, 1704, 1706–1707, 1709, 1710, and 1712. In this role, he was referred to as a Deputy of the Court.[4]

Thomas Yale was also Captain of the Train Band. In colonial times, a Train Band was a local militia unit organized for defense and public order. Their primary duty was to respond to Indian attacks. “Wallingford furnished her quota of troops for the French and Indian wars in 1690 and again in 1694 for the defense of Albany”[5] The cost of maintaining county militias was a heavy tax on the settlers – by 1695 the colony of Connecticut had drawn 7,000 pounds for this purpose.

In 1691, there was “great difficulty and disturbance in the town of Wallingford in regard to the choice of Military Officers”[5]. Alternative representatives in place of Thomas Yale and John Merriman were sent to represent the town at the General Court. However, the court would not seat the replacements, and upon review, promoted Thomas Yale to Captain.[5] Prior to that time, his military position was that of Ensign or sometimes Lieutenant.

In 1705 at age 57, Captain Thomas was named Justice of the Peace for the county of New Haven. “In colonial America the position, with its judicial, executive, and legislative powers, was the community’s main political force and therefore the most powerful public office open to colonists.”[6]

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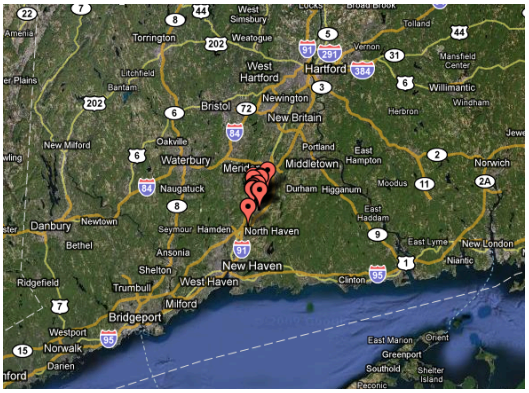
In 1710 he and the Rev. Samuel Street were the only surviving signers of the Plantation Covenant agreement. On September 19, 1710 he was one of a committee of three appointed to sell Indian lands in the town. Thomas's long career included positions as Justice of the Peace, Captain of the Train Band, surveyor of land, and moderator of the town meetings. He also kept the records of the proceedings for nearly twenty years.

## About Wallingford

Shortly after the founding of Wallingford in 1670, there were 42 planters. In 1690 there were just 73 families. Tax rolls in October 1704 show New Haven at 18,793 pounds, and Wallingford at 6,692 pounds. In 1709, the town had grown to 700 inhabitants.[8]

In 2010, it had approximately 45,000 people.




Present day Wallingford lies along Route 91 between New Haven and Hartford, Conn.

## End of Life

Captain Thomas Yale died at Wallingford January 26, 1736, at age 87 years. He may have been buried in the historic Center Street Cemetery in Wallingford but he is not listed as such.[7,9]

## Research Notes

**Online Genealogy References**:
WikiTree ID: Yale-17
FamilySearch ID: L69Q-5LB
Wikipedia: Thomas Yale (Wallingford)
Find a Grave Memorial: 201911224

**Further Reading**:

- Yale, Max Brian. *Guide to the Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection.* 2025
- Yale, Max Brian. *Yale Family Coat of Arms* - Origin and History. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*, 2025

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## References

1. Yale, Rodney Horace. *Yale Genealogy and History of Wales*. Beatrice, NE: Milburn & Scott, 1908. Ref no. 29 p. 123

2. Wikipedia: Nehemiah Royce House

3. Yale, Elihu. “The Yale Family, or the Descendants of David Yale”, New Haven CT: Storer and Stone Printers, 1850.

4. Hoadly, Charles J.. The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut from Aug 1689 to May 1706. Hartford, CT: 1868

5. Charles Henry Davis, M.D. History of Wallingford, Meriden, CT: 1870 p 352

6. JRank Articles Justice of the Peace

7. Wallingford Center Street Cemetery Index

8. Perkins, G.W. “Historical Sketches of Meriden, West Meriden.” Franklin E. Hinman, 1849, pp 103-104

9. Find a Grave Memorial 413351178

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